

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4530

To amend the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to establish an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding within the Corporation for National and Community Service, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 14, 2022

Mr. COONS (for himself and Mr. SASSE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To amend the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to establish an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding within the Corporation for National and Community Service, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Building Civic Bridges
5 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING.**

2 Subtitle H of title I of the National and Community
3 Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12653 et seq.) is amended
4 by adding at the end the following:

5 **“PART VI—CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING**

6 **“SEC. 198T. OFFICE OF CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING.**

7 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There shall be in the Cor-
8 poration an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding (in this section
9 referred to as the ‘Office’). The Office shall be headed by
10 an Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding, who shall be designated
11 by the Chief Executive Officer pursuant to section 195(b).

12 “(b) DUTIES.—The Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding
13 shall carry out each of the following:

14 “(1) Administer the grant program described in
15 subsection (d) to support civic bridgebuilding across
16 the United States, including by establishing stand-
17 ardized criteria (based on principles of scientific re-
18 search) to track the effectiveness of projects and ac-
19 tivities funded under such program.

20 “(2) Support the Corporation in providing
21 training in skills and techniques relevant to civic
22 bridgebuilding (with the consideration of best prac-
23 tices collected by the Office, including through input
24 from the Advisory Committee under subsection
25 (c))—

1 “(A) for participants (including individuals
2 who have been selected to be participants) of a
3 program receiving funding under a national
4 service law; and

5 “(B) upon request by an organization that
6 receives funding under a national service law or
7 that is carrying out a program in which partici-
8 pants described in subparagraph (A) are par-
9 ticipating, for such organization.

10 “(3) Select the members of the Advisory Com-
11 mittee under subsection (c).

12 “(4) Support research and evaluations on civic
13 bridgebuilding and the dissemination of related in-
14 formation, including through—

15 “(A) evaluation and oversight of the grant
16 program described in subsection (d);

17 “(B) as the Corporation determines nec-
18 essary, collaboration (including through the
19 evaluation of the activities of the Corporation
20 relating to civic bridgebuilding and civic en-
21 gagement) between the Office and other offices
22 (such as the Office of Research and Evalua-
23 tion), teams, or individuals within the Corpora-
24 tion; and

1 “(C) the establishment of a publicly avail-
2 able collection of publications for a research
3 base for the purposes of monitoring national
4 metrics for civic bridgebuilding and assembling
5 research focused on evaluating the extent to
6 which civic bridgebuilding and civic engagement
7 activities strengthen or weaken other civic
8 bridgebuilding and civic engagement activities
9 and outcomes in the United States.

10 “(5) Activate a public conversation about the
11 importance of civic bridgebuilding by convening and
12 coordinating civic bridgebuilding programs and pro-
13 viding resources, networking, and collaboration op-
14 portunities to individuals and entities in the civic
15 bridgebuilding field, such as through—

16 “(A) network cultivation to strengthen the
17 community of those involved, interested, or en-
18 gaged in the civic bridgebuilding field, including
19 through activities such as—

20 “(i) in-person and virtual events for
21 the public to showcase impactful practices,
22 bring civic bridgebuilding leaders together,
23 present relevant research, and explore
24 emerging needs that would benefit from
25 civic bridgebuilding;

1 “(ii) organizing peer-learning opportu-
2 nities to facilitate conversations within the
3 civic bridgebuilding field;

4 “(iii) organizing and distributing lists
5 of civic bridgebuilding leaders and organi-
6 zations and groups in the civic
7 bridgebuilding field; and

8 “(iv) coordinating national commu-
9 nications among civic bridgebuilding lead-
10 ers, including through the promotion of
11 civic bridgebuilding programs and sharing
12 stories of local impact; and

13 “(B) developing or distributing resources
14 to expand best practices in the civic
15 bridgebuilding field, including through—

16 “(i) the curation of a digital resource
17 hub focused on sharing resources from en-
18 tities that receive grants under subsection
19 (d), civic bridgebuilding leaders, civic
20 bridgebuilding programs, or the publicly
21 available collection of publications for a re-
22 search base established under paragraph
23 (4)(C); and

1 “(ii) the production of new resources,
2 training, or best practices based on lessons
3 from the civic bridgebuilding field.

4 “(c) ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—

5 “(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established
6 within the Office of Civic Bridgebuilding an Advisory
7 Committee.

8 “(2) MEMBERS.—

9 “(A) SELECTION.—The Advisory Com-
10 mittee shall be composed of 9 members selected
11 by the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding, including
12 a member designated by the Officer of Civic
13 Bridgebuilding as the Chairperson of the Advisory
14 Committee, and such members shall be
15 civic bridgebuilding leaders—

16 “(i) who represent diverse ideological,
17 religious, racial, regional, or ethnic commu-
18 nities; and

19 “(ii) with relevant experience and ex-
20 pertise from the civic bridgebuilding field.

21 “(B) TERMS OF SERVICE.—A member of
22 the Advisory Committee shall serve for a term
23 of 3 years.

24 “(3) DUTIES.—The Advisory Committee shall
25 carry out each of the following:

1 “(A) Provide advice and consultation to
2 the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding on the prior-
3 ities and administration of the Office.

4 “(B) Conduct an annual review of grants
5 awarded under subsection (d), with a focus on
6 diversity, equity, and inclusion, and identifying
7 any gaps or needs that emerged in an applica-
8 tion cycle.

9 “(C) Conduct an annual review of the
10 process of awarding grants under subsection
11 (d), including a review of rubrics or metrics for
12 selection of grant recipients used by the Officer
13 of Civic Bridgebuilding.

14 “(D) Review the analysis provided under
15 the peer review process under subsection (d)(5).

16 “(d) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING PILOT GRANT PRO-
17 GRAM.—

18 “(1) IN GENERAL.—From the amounts appro-
19 priated to carry out this subsection, the Corporation
20 (acting through the Officer of Civic Bridgebuilding
21 and in consultation with the Advisory Committee es-
22 tablished under subsection (c))—

23 “(A) shall carry out a pilot program for a
24 3-year period to award grants, on a competitive
25 basis, to eligible entities to support civic

1 bridgebuilding programs across the United
2 States; and

3 “(B) may carry out such a pilot program
4 for additional 3-year periods.

5 “(2) GRANT PERIOD.—A grant awarded under
6 this subsection shall be for a 1-year period. Grants
7 shall be awarded under this subsection in 3 grant
8 cycles for each 3-year period of the program carried
9 out under paragraph (1).

10 “(3) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a
11 grant under this subsection, an eligible entity shall
12 submit an application to the Corporation at such
13 time, in such manner, and containing such informa-
14 tion and assurances as the Corporation may require,
15 including—

16 “(A) a description of the project that will
17 be funded with the grant;

18 “(B) an explanation of how that such
19 project will—

20 “(i) engage diverse communities;

21 “(ii) facilitate the establishment or
22 continuation of civic bridgebuilding, which
23 may include addressing the root causes of
24 polarization as articulated in the publicly
25 available collection of publications for a re-

1 search base established under subsection
2 (b)(4)(C);

3 “(iii) reflect research supporting the
4 efficacy and impact of the proposed ap-
5 proach for the project; and

6 “(iv) ensure physical, social, and psy-
7 chological safety for all participants in-
8 volved in the project;

9 “(C) a description of evidence-based best
10 practices for how such safety will be achieved;
11 and

12 “(D) an assurance that the eligible entity
13 will report outcomes of such project to track ef-
14 fectiveness based on standardized criteria estab-
15 lished by the Office of Civic Bridgebuilding
16 under subsection (b)(1) or will evaluate the im-
17 pact of such project based on principles of sci-
18 entific research.

19 “(4) USES OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity re-
20 ceiving a grant under this subsection shall use the
21 grant funds to carry out a project to advance civic
22 bridgebuilding in communities across the United
23 States, which may include addressing the root
24 causes of polarization as articulated in the publicly

1 available collection of publications for a research
 2 base established under subsection (b)(4)(C).

3 “(5) PEER REVIEW PROCESS.—The Corporation
 4 shall establish a peer review process which shall in-
 5 clude consultation with research communities in the
 6 civic bridgebuilding field to analyze the process of
 7 awarding grants (and the grants that are awarded)
 8 under this subsection.

9 “(e) COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—The Comptroller
 10 General of the United States shall, on an annual basis,
 11 submit to Congress a report, which summarizes and as-
 12 sesses the effectiveness and impact of the activities carried
 13 out under grants awarded under subsection (d).

14 “(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

15 “(1) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING.—The term ‘civic
 16 bridgebuilding’—

17 “(A) means an activity that—

18 “(i) fosters respect between diverse
 19 communities;

20 “(ii) strengthens relationships across
 21 lines of difference;

22 “(iii) forges a sense of common civic
 23 purpose; and

24 “(iv) seeks to solve a community prob-
 25 lem and diminish polarization; and

1 “(B) includes—

2 “(i) activities that take place in local
3 communities, where individuals and insti-
4 tutions come together to build empathy,
5 strengthen belonging, and address local
6 issues; and

7 “(ii) activities at the field level, where
8 civic bridgebuilding leaders work together
9 to share research and best practices, learn
10 from one another, and grow other civic
11 bridgebuilding.

12 “(2) CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING LEADER.—The
13 term ‘civic bridgebuilding leader’ means an indi-
14 vidual who leads civic bridgebuilding programs or ef-
15 forts.

16 “(3) CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.—The term ‘civic en-
17 gagement’ means an individual or collective action
18 designed to address a public concern or an unmet
19 human, educational, health care, environmental, or
20 public safety need.

21 “(4) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible en-
22 tity’ means a nonprofit entity, public institution, ele-
23 mentary school, secondary school, institution of
24 higher education, religious group, or consortium of
25 any such entities.

1 “(5) PUBLIC INSTITUTION.—The term ‘public
2 institution’ means a library or unit of State, local,
3 or special purpose government.

4 “(6) RESEARCH.—The term ‘research’ means
5 research which embodies principles of scientific re-
6 search.

7 “(7) RESEARCH BASE.—The term ‘research
8 base’ means any publications that contain observa-
9 tions, analysis, and conclusions based on principles
10 of scientific research with respect to the challenges
11 of political and social polarization in the United
12 States, and practical approaches to strengthen social
13 cohesion, foster a sense of national connection, or
14 improve intergroup relations in divided communities.

15 “(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
16 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
17 \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2023 through 2025.”.

18 **SEC. 3. TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

19 The table of contents in section 1(b) of the National
20 and Community Service Act of 1990 is amended by insert-
21 ing at the end of the item relating to subtitle H of title
22 I, the following:

 “PART VI—CIVIC BRIDGEBUILDING

 “Sec. 198T. Office of Civic Bridgebuilding.”.

